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ABSTRACT

A study of non-native children's acquisition of communicative competence examined the child's construction of rules of conversation in the second language. The linguistic devices that children use to link up their utterances with those of another speaker, i.e., cohesion-creating devices that create textual unity, were focused upon. Repetition, one device that links utterances across speakers, and the interrelations among repetition and mechanisms that allocate turns in conversation were examined. These include both attention-getting devices ("look") and response-getting devices (questions). Two female children, four and five years old, who were living in the United States while their fathers were studying or visiting, were examined. The children were videotaped in a structured play setting with an investigator. Repetition without prosodic change is a less effective means of turn allocation than question-answer sequences or attention directors because it does not directly pass the conversation back to the other speaker. Two effects that a repetition without prosodic change can have on a conversation are illustrated, and conversational exchanges and diagrams illustrating communication devices are presented. (SW)

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REPETITION AND TURN-ALLOCATION IN THE NON-NATIVE ACQUISITION OF DISCOURSE

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Introduction

In recent years the process of non-native language acquisition has come to be an increasingly frequent topic of investigation. The focus of many of these studies has been intra-sentential phenomena, in particular the acquisition of various grammatical morphemes (Dulay and Burt, 1973, 1974; Cancino, Rosansky and Schumann, 1974). How the non-native child comes to communicate effectively and meaningfully through the development of different conversational rules has rarely been examined. As discussed elsewhere (Keller-Cohen, in press), the purposes for which a child uses language and the rules governing the use are in some sense more relevant than other phenomena to questions of acquiring competence in a second language. This position is in agreement with Hymes (1972), who argues that command of a language involves more than knowledge of grammaticality.

> Recall that one is concerned to explain how a child comes rapidly to be able to produce and understand (in principle) any and all of the grammatical sentences of a language. Consider now a child with just that ability. A child who might produce any sentence whatever--such a child would be likely to be institutionalized; even more so if not only sentences, but also speech or silence was random, unpredictable....We have then to account for the fact that a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others.
>
> (Hymes, 1972:277)

This paper reports the status of our investigation of non-native children's acquisition of communicative competence. A theme central to

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our investigation is the child's construction of rules of conversation in his second language. In particular, we are interested in the linguistic devices that the child uses to link up her utterances with those of another speaker, i.e. cohesion-creating devices that create textual unity.

Utterances across speakers can be related in numerous ways and there is considerable disagreement over the range and domain of linking devices (Johnson and Bayless, 1976). The first section of this paper examines repetition---one device that links utterances across speakers. The second section considers the interrelations among repetition and mechanisms that allocate turns in conversation. These include both attention-getting devices (look, see) and response-getting devices (e.g. questions). We shall suggest ways in which these phenomena are related and attempt to indicate the direction that future research might take.

Review of the literature

It has frequently been observed that in the course of learning language children frequently reproduce all or part of a prior utterance. This utterance may have been produced by the same speaker with or without other utterances intervening. Spontaneous reproduction of a co-present speaker's utterance has variously been referred to as imitation (Baldwin, 1895; Ervin-Tripp, 1964; Bloom, Hood and Lightbown, 1974; Scollon, 1974), echoic utterances (Nakanishi and Owada, 1973) and repetition (Keenan, 1975-b). Spontaneous reproduction of one's own speech has been termed repetition (Scollon, 1974) and self-repetition (Keller-Cohen and Gracey, 1976). The purpose of re-productive or imitative language behavior has often been viewed as rehearsal or practice of the speech productions of another speaker, the hypothesized result being to learn the imitated form(s) (Preyer, 1888; Baldwin, 1895; Sully, 1896; Stern, 1924).

In more recent years it has generally been agreed that while imitation is probably involved in the process of language acquisition, it is not a sufficient explanation of how a child learns to communicate verbally with members of his environment. Ervin-Tripp (1964) investigated the language development of five children approximately two years old. She compared rules formulated to describe word order in the children's spontaneous utterances with those describing imitative utterances. With the exception of one child, she found that the same rules described both utterance types. Similarly, Kemp and Dale (1973) examined grammatical features in both spontaneous and imitative utterances of 30 children and discovered no difference between utterance types. Their finding thus agrees with that of Ervin-Tripp, that "there is not a shred of evidence supporting a view that progress toward adult norms of grammar arises merely from practice in overt imitation of adult sentences." (1964:397).

While these studies concluded that imitation could not be a major impetus in language development, they left unexplored the nature of its contribution. Bloom, Hood and Lightbown (1974) investigated imitative and spontaneous utterances from 6 children during the period in which their MLU increased from 1.0 to 2.0. Three of the children were found to be low-frequency imitators (15% of total utterances). The three remaining children were high-frequency imitators (30% or more of total

utterances). Bloom, et al. found that there were marked contrasts between the spontaneous and imitative utterances of the high frequency imitators. There was a consistent tendency for lexical items and grammatical differences to distinguish imitative from spontaneous speech for these children. In addition, the MLU of these imitative utterances was equal to or exceeded that of spontaneous utterances. As the authors indicate, these findings do not conflict with those of Ervin-Tripp since she compared word order in spontaneous and imitative utterances, and did not examine the lexical and grammatical features of these utterances.

In contrast to previous studies, Keenan (1974; 1975b) approached repetition in terms of the communicative functions that it can serve. She argued that essential facts about the process of acquiring a language are ignored if the communicative intentions expressed by repetition are not considered. Drawing on data from twin boys, Keenan (1975b) found that repetition served the functions of agreement, self-informing, querying, counter-claiming and the like.[1] She suggests that Bloom's high-frequency imitators may simply be carrying out certain communicative intentions using repetition, while the low-frequency imitators might be expressing these same functions with other devices.[2]

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[1] In Keenan's data many of the communicative functions reported were expressed by repetition with prosodic change. The imitations reported in Bloom, et al. and Ervin-Tripp apparently excluded by definition repetitions with intonational change. It remains to be seen whether the functions of repetition without prosodic change are as readily determinable. Our data (See Table 1) indicate that the frequency of repetition with prosodic change is far below that without prosodic change.

[2] If this observation is correct one might expect a difference between the children in the proportion of repetitions with prosodic change, since as indicated above this type of repetition expressed numerous discourse functions. As Table 1 indicates, Toko and Maija differed strikingly in the frequency with which they used repetition with prosodic change. Bloom (1970) and Bloom, Lightbown and Hood (1975) found that children acquired expression of certain notions about the world in similar developmental orders; however they expressed them through different formal devices. This leads us to suspect that Toko used repetition with prosodic change to express certain communicative relations while Maija used other devices to express those communicative functions. This would tend to support Keenan's claim that "it may be the case that 'imitators' are not in fact imitating and that all of these children do similar communicative work; they simply differ in the formal devices used to carry out this work." (1975b)

Subjects and Methods

The subjects in the present investigation are females who were living in this country while their fathers were graduate students or visiting scholars at the University of Michigan. Toko, a native Japanese speaker , was 5;6 when our investigation began. She had been in the United States 5 months prior to our contact with her. Maija, a native Finnish speaker, was 4;3 at the onset of the study and had been here for 3 months.

The children were videotaped approximately every week for one-half hour in a structured play setting with a native English speaking graduate student investigator. A different graduate student was assigned to each child and the adult interacted with the same child throughout the duration of the investigation. The type of interaction between the child and adult in our study can be characterized by what Goffman has called focused interaction, "the kind of interaction that occurs when persons gather close together and openly cooperate to sustain a single focus of attention, typically by taking turns in talking." (1963:24).

During the eight months of our investigation, Toko's MLU increased from 1.8 to 2.7. Maija's rose to a point slightly beyond Toko's, from 1.7 to 3.1. Their type-token ratios increased from .44 to .62 for Toko and to .66 for Maija. While there are certainly questions to be raised about the informativeness of the MLU and the type-token ratio for non-native children, these indices enable us to compare their progress in language development in a very general way with first language learners.[3] In general, both children developed increased linguistic abilities in English as is demonstrated by their production of longer and more diverse utterances.

Repetition

Repetition is defined here as the reproduction of all or part of a preceding adult utterance. Initially, our analyses dealt with repetitions that were not accompanied by prosodic change. In order to permit comparison with Bloom, Hood and Lightbown (1974), we considered an utterance to be a repetition if no more than 5 utterances intervened between the model and the child's utterance.

Table 1 presents the types and tokens of total utterances and repetitions for the two children.

Table 2 presents the proportion of repetition types and tokens in Toko's and Maija's monthly samples.

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[3] For discussion of the limitations of the MLU as a reliable measure of language development see Crystal (1974).

TABLE 1

Types and Tokens
of
Total Utterances and Repetitions[1]

	Number of Sessions	Utterance Types	Repetition Types	Repet. with Prosodic Chance Types	Utterance Tokens	Repetition Tokens	Repet. with Prosodic Change Tokens[2]
TOKO							
Nov.	3	220	26	8	425	32	10
Dec.	2	191	14	7	445	15	8
Jan.	2	122	9	1	247	9	1
Feb.	3	142	26	9	321	28	9
Mar.	4	510	51	15	933	61	16
Apr.	4	658	30	10	1042	33	10
May	2	428	5	2	683	12	2
June	3	492	19	9	788	21	9
MAIJA							
Nov.	2	57	6	0	110	7	0
Dec.	2	123	8	0	249	9	0
Jan.	2	215	13	2	490	16	2
Feb.	4	634	13	0	1163	14	0
Mar.	3	478	11	0	800	12	0
Apr.	5	819	11	0	1233	11	0
May	1	226	2	1	365	2	1
June	4	815	18	1	1309	18	1

[1] These figures represent only those utterances which were fully intelligible.

[2] This column includes repetitions with all types of prosodic change (rising intonation, falling intonation, 'counting' intonation, 'surprise' intonation).

TABLE 2

Proportion of Repetitions
in Total Utterances

	Proportion of Repetit. Types	Proportion of Repetit. Tokens
TOKO		
Nov.	.12	.08
Dec.	.07	.03
Jan.	.07	.04
Feb.	.18	.09
Mar.	.10	.07
Apr.	.05	.03
May	.01	.02
June	.04	.03
MAIJA		
Nov.	.10	.06
Dec.	.07	.04
Jan.	.06	.03
Feb.	.02	.01
Mar.	.02	.02
Apr.	.01	.01
May	.001	.01
June	.02	.01

The proportion of repetitions in Toko's utterance tokens ranged from 9% to 2% and in Maija's from 6% to 1%. Toko repeated significantly more often than Maija, (correlated) $t(7)=2.75$, $p<.025$. The frequency of repetition in their speech was far below that in the child-child interaction reported in Keenan (1975a); the proportion of repetition in their speech was similar to Bloom's subjects who imitated infrequently.[4] Repeating a preceding utterance might be a less productive strategy in acquiring a second language, since the non-native child already has at her disposal hypotheses and strategies from another language.

It seems to us that repetition is conversationally cooperative in two ways. First, it acknowledges that the hearer has paid attention to the speaker's utterance. No claim is made here regarding the extent of the hearer's comprehension of what she repeats. Rather, it is argued that the hearer has processed the acoustic signal of the speaker sufficiently to repeat at least some portion of it. Second, since repetition is one way of taking one's turn in conversation, it signals to the speaker that the hearer is still participating in the discourse.

Repetition without prosodic change does not, however, directly allocate the turn to the next speaker. That is, while a repetition constitutes a turn in conversation, it does not require a subsequent response from the other speaker the way a question does.

The following models illustrate this point:

(I) abab (II) $a_1 \rightarrow b_1 \rightarrow a_2 \rightarrow b_2$ (III) $\begin{matrix} a_1 \rightarrow b & a_2 \\ a_1 \rightarrow b_1 & b_2 \end{matrix}$

Using Schegloff (1972b) as our point of departure, model (I) represents the sequencing of turns in a conversation between two speakers, a and b. The conversation is underway, the assignment of roles, a first speaker, b second speaker, will not be discussed here.[5] This diagram simply conveys the underlying pattern of alternation of speech between two speakers. For purposes of this discussion, a represents the adult and b the child.

Model (II) characterizes a somewhat idealized conversational exchange. In a_1 the adult makes a contribution to the conversation that either directly requires a response from b as in a question-answer sequence, or provides enough new information for b to respond. These relationships are represented by an arrow (→). In b_1 the child responds in such a way that the conversation is returned to the adult. Among other things, this can be accomplished by asking a question in response to a question (1, below)(Schegloff's insertion sequence, 1972a) or by providing

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[4] Both our data and Bloom's consist of adult-child interaction. The proportion of repetition in our data is considerably less than that reported in Keenan. However, since her data is child-child interaction, the 2 samples are not comparable.

[5] See Schegloff (1972b) for a discussion of speaker assignment in conversational beginnings.

sufficient new information that enables the adult to continue the conversation (2, below)(See Bloom, Rocissano and Hood, 1975).

(1) X: Are you coming tonight?
Y: Can I bring a guest?
X: Sure.
Y: I'll be there.

(Schegloff, 1972a)

(2) Adult: When are your mommy's parents coming to visit?
Toko: mom/ no she's (s/c) n· that parents not coming.
Adult: Never?
Toko: (shaking head) she's not coming/

Model (III) displays two effects that a repetition without prosodic change can have on a conversation. In the first schema, the child's repetition (b) does not provide new information; it does not extend the contribution in a's turn. a must therefore extend the conversation if it is to move forward. The absence of an arrow between b and a_2 represents b's failure and a's subsequent attempt to extend the conversation. An example of this is (3).

(3) Adult: That's a boy, yes. But where's the mommy?
Toko: mommy/
Adult: Is mommy still inside?

That b's repetition does not add new information does not imply that it serves no function in the dialogue. Indeed b's repetition might be viewed as thinking over a's question. Yet it does not contribute information sufficient for a to comment on. Hence, the job of moving the conversation along falls on a.

In the second schema, b's repetition also fails to provide adequate new information. However, in this case a does not extend the conversation, but rather b moves off in a new direction with a second comment of her own. Example (4) illustrates this type of sequence.

(Toko, playing with dollhouse, puts doll in chimney)

(4) Adult: That's the chimney.
Toko: chimney/
Toko: (trying to put doll through window of dollhouse, laughing) no:/

Since Toko was a relatively fluent speaker of Japanese prior to her arrival in this country, it seemed unlikely that her use of repetition (without prosodic change) indicated her inability to allocate turns in the conversation. It might instead be the case that she employed a repetition-related device to pass the conversation back to the adult. Repetition with rising intonation is one such device.

It is commonly agreed that question-answer (QA) sequences are efficient means of allocating turns (selecting next speaker). They are a subset of sequential units in conversation termed adjacency pairs

(Schegloff and Sacks, 1973). They exert more pressure on the other participant to take a turn than does an assertion. Repetition with rising intonation is a subset of QA sequences and is related to contingent queries (Garvey, in press) in that it questions a prior utterance by using a portion of that utterance and adding question intonation. (5) and (6) are examples of repetition with rising intonation.

(5) Adult: We have big crayons, if you like the big ones better.
Toko: big crayon↑/
Adult: Yeah, let's use those.
Toko: big crayon/ ---/

(6) Adult: I'm gonna make a duck.
Toko: [do:wk] ↑/
Adult: Duck.
Toko: duck!/duck ↑/
Adult: Mm-hm. Do you know what a duck is?

Table 3 compares repetitions with rising intonation in both children's data.

TABLE 3

Frequency and Proportion of
Repetition with Rising Intonation

	Toko Frequency	Toko Proportion in Total Utterances	Maija Frequency
Nov.	9	.02	0
Dec.	6	.01	0
Jan.	1	.004	0
Feb.	4	.01	0
Mar.	15	.02	0
Apr.	8	.007	0
May	2	.002	0
June	5	.006	0

The hypothesis that Toko would use a repetition-related strategy for turn allocation is clearly borne out by the data. Over the 8 months of our investigation, Maija never used repetition with rising intonation while the proportion of this utterance type in Toko's speech ranged from .002 to .02. The fact that these proportions are small does not diminish the difference between the two children. The small size of these proportions does suggest however, that otner means of turn allocation must be used.

As discussed above, effective techniques for turn allocation are those that create the greatest pressure on the conversation, e.g. QA sequences or summons-answer (SA) sequences (S: Jack. A: Yes?). Another way of

thinking about these devices is that they unambiguously require a response. QA sequences allocate a turn without necessarily allocating it to someone, while summons-answer sequences by definition call on a specific person to respond. (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974)

In order to further compare Toko and Maija we examined their use of those conversational devices that most clearly return the conversational ball (Fillmore, 1973) to the co-present speaker. These devices include Wh-questions, Yes-No questions, utterances with rising intonation (excluding repetitions with rising intonation), What with rising intonation, Attention-directors (look, see) and Vocatives. Table 4 describes these results.

Table 4
Devices for Turn Allocation[1, 2]

	Wh-Ques.	Y/N-Ques.	Rising Intonat.	Look See	Vocative	What↑
TOKO						
Nov.	.004	-	.02	-	-	-
Dec.	.02	-	.07	-	.04	.004
Jan.	.03	-	.04	.004	.004	.004
Feb.	.07	-	.009	-	-	-
Mar.	.09	.008	.02	.005	.001	-
Apr.	.04	.007	.03	-	-	.01
May	.07	.008	.04	.001	.001	.004
June	.03	.02	.05	.007	-	.007
MAIJA						
Nov.	.04	-	-	.01	-	-
Dec.	.04	-	.01	.01	-	-
Jan.	.09	-	-	.004	-	-
Feb.	.07	-	.001	.03	-	-
Mar.	.08	.01	.01	.08	.003	-
Apr.	.12	.005	.004	.08	.01	-
May	.06	-	.002	.07	.008	-
June	.10	.001	.003	.03	-	-

[1] Proportion in total utterances

[2] Utterances falling under more than one category (such as see↑) have been included in the figures for both categories. These double-coded utterances constitute 1% (Mija) and 3% (Toko) of the turn-allocators in this table.

In both sets of data the proportion of Wh-questions tends to rise although this is more apparent in Maija's speech. Using a correlated t test, Maija was found to use significantly more Wh-questions than Toko, $t(7)=2.07$, $p< .05$. No difference was found between the children in the frequency of their use of Yes-No questions. Utterances with rising intonation were used significantly more often by Toko, (correlated) $t(7)=-4.78$, $p< .005$. Maija used the attention directors look, lookit, lookat, and see significantly more often than Toko, (correlated) $t(7)=2.75$, $p< .025$. No difference was found to exist between the children in the proportion of the vocative in their speech.

The finding that Toko used utterances with rising intonation as a productive means of turn allocation is consonant with her productive use of repetition with prosodic change. Other evidence suggests that she was particularly aware of phonological phenomena in English. Her data contain numerous examples of phonological repair sequences while Maija's contain almost none. One such sequence is presented below (7):

(7) (The adult has asked Toko where the dolls are going)
Toko: [dInji wæt] (disney world)
Adult: Where?
Toko: [dI^{h}: ni: wæt]/
Adult: [dɛnjU wərt ↑]

As discussed above, repetition without prosodic change is a less effective means of turn allocation than QA sequences or attention directors because it does not directly pass the conversation back to the other speaker. Maija used repetition less frequently than Toko while using Wh-questions and Attention-directors more often. In order to explore this relationship, we compared repetition with turn allocators (Wh-Q, Y/N-Q, What with rising intonation, Rising intonation, and Attention-directors) in both children's data. Since the turn allocators include a larger number of phenomena, it is the direction rather than the amount of change across months that should be considered. (See Figure 1)

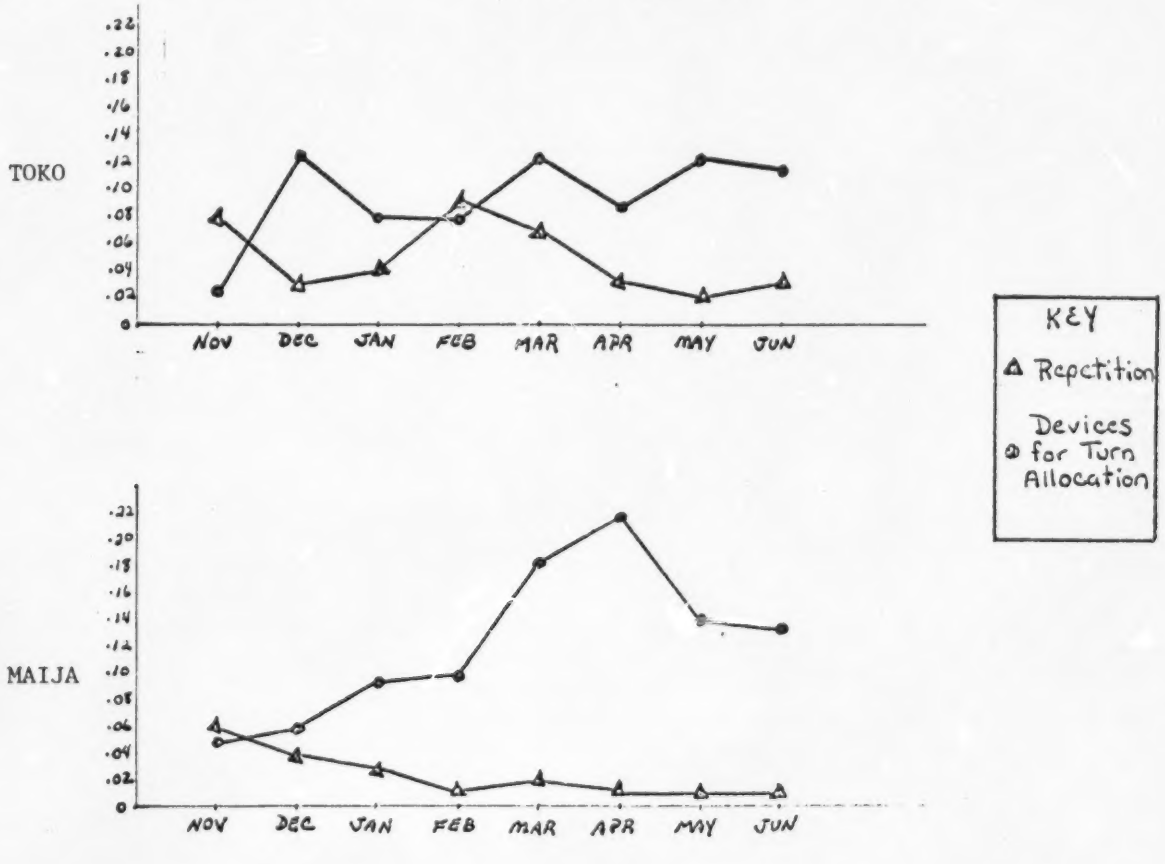

Figure 1. Proportions of repetition and devices for turn allocation (Tokens)

Examination of between-month shifts in Toko's data reveals that in general, repetition and turn allocation were inversely related. The March-April shift is the exception since both repetition and turn allocation fell. A similar pattern is seen in Maija's speech. The April-May and May-June shifts do not affect our hypothesis since the proportion of repetition remained stable. The children were similar in that the proportion of repetition was negatively related to the proportion of devices that sequentially organize conversation. They differed in the choice of turn allocating mechanisms---Maija using Wh-questions and Attention-directors, Toko using Rising intonation.

Conclusions

It has been noted elsewhere (Bloom, Lightbown and Hood, 1975) that children may use different linguistic devices to express similar semantic relations. The present investigation suggests that this observation can be extended to differences in discourse styles. The child learns that while the structure of conversation exhibits certain requisite features (Sacks, et al., 1974), the manner of expressing these characteristics is somewhat flexible. Whether the type of discourse style is related to other domains in language is not yet known. We are currently investigating devices for cohesion (other than repetition) and turn allocation. Although the data described in this paper are drawn from second language learners, we believe the findings are relevant to questions regarding the nature of language acquisition in general.

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